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Seventy-first year

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7774th meeting

Wednesday, 21 September 2016, 9.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Key	(New Zealand)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Domingos Augusto
	China	Mr. Wang Yi
	Egypt	President Al Sisi
	France	Mr. Ayrault
	Japan	Mr. Abe
	Malaysia	Mr. Hamidi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Senegal	President Sall
	Spain	Mr. García Margallo
	Ukraine	President Poroshenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Johnson
	United States of America	Mr. Kerry
	Uruguay	Mr. Nin Novoa
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Ms. Rodríguez Gómez

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 9.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: I wish to warmly welcome the Heads of State and Government, the Secretary-General, Ministers and other representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to the His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I thank Prime Minister Key for organizing this very important meeting.

The Syrian tragedy shames us all. The collective failure of the international community should haunt every member of the Security Council. Well over 300,000 Syrians have been killed, half of the country's population has been uprooted and much of its infrastructure lies in ruins. Many Syrians fear the fragmentation of their State could follow, with Da'esh and Al-Qaida affiliates poised to exploit further chaos. Neighbouring countries are hosting millions of Syrian refugees, while many lose their lives trying to reach Europe. Forces unleashed by the conflict are destabilizing the region. Terrorist attacks linked to the crisis have struck around the world. Global norms of humanitarian law have been flagrantly violated. We have seen indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian facilities, the medieval tactic of sieges and the weaponization of hunger, the use of chemical weapons, including attacks recently attributed to Da'esh and the Syrian Government. Tens of thousands of men, women and children remain in arbitrary detention, in appalling conditions and systematically subjected to unspeakable torture. Meanwhile, foreign fighters and arms flow to all sides. All of that defies the resolutions of the Council.

Tragically, the divisons inside Syria are too often amplified by regional divisions, and then mirrored in the Council. Those divisions condemn Syria to its terrible fate. Yet we know that international unity can make a difference. Council unity and resolve led to the elimination of Syria's previously denied chemical weapons and attribution of responsibility for their use. Food and medicine have been delivered to millions of Syrians, including across front lines and via air drops to besieged and hard-to-reach areas. And the formation of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) provided fresh momentum to the search for a settlement and paved the way for resolution 2254 (2015).

A cessation of hostilities, albeit fragile, began in late February, with positive results for a few months. In that window, the United Nations intensified humanitarian operations and brought the parties to Geneva for talks. But that process was once again overwhelmed by violence. The long-sought agreement between the Russian Federation and the United States concluded on 9 September represents a new opportunity. The attack on a United Nations-Syrian Arab Red Crescent humanitarian convoy two days ago was an outrage that resulted in several casualties and forced the United Nations to suspend aid operations. I am looking at options for vigorously investigating that and similar atrocities against civilians. I am also concerned about the earlier attack in Deir ez-Zor, in which dozens of lives were lost. I take note of the rapid acknowledgement by the United States of that strike and look forward to more information.

We must remain determined that the ceasefire will be revived. I urge everyone to use their influence now — today — to ensure that it does. This is a chance to reinstate the cessation of hostilities, faciliate humanitarian aid to Aleppo and throughout the country, ground the Syrian air force and see joint military action against terrorist groups, such as Da'esh and the Al-Nusra Front. If we can do that, it would open the road to political talks.

As soon as a new round of intra-Syrian negotiations begins, they must focus on the fundamental issues for a viable transition, in particular — and I use the exact

words of the mediators' summary of the last round of talks —

> "how power is to be exercised in practice by the transitional governance, including in relation to the presidency, executive powers and the control of Government and security institutions".

The ISSG has already signalled its support for that approach. It urged the parties,

> "to reach agreement on a framework for a genuine political transition, which would include a broad, inclusive transitional body with full executive power".

And the ISSG co-Chairs formally requested that the United Nations develop proposals as a starting point for future tasks. With my strong backing, Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura will be ready to present to the parties a draft framework of proposals as a starting point for negotiations for a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political transition. We are fully guided by resolution 2254 (2015), the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and the ISSG statement, as well as the clear agenda for intra-Syrian talks laid out in resolution 2254 (2015).

I have asked the Special Envoy to work intensively towards convening formal negotiations as soon as possible. I call on the Security Council to fully support the Special Envoy as he proceeds in that manner, with no ifs, ands or buts. We have to unequivocally move ahead towards a credible political process. I expect all to use their influence with the Syrian parties to make sure they come to talks ready to genuinely negotiate the core issues of political transition. No country's destiny should rest on what happens with a single individual. If one side continues to insist that the powers of the Office of the President are not subject to negotiation, by definition there cannot be a negotiated settlement. If another side insists that the President simply depart at the very outset of a transition, it is difficult to see a genuine negotiation take place.

Transition is not an end in itself; it is a process by which the Syrian people can achieve a new, peaceful and democratic reality while protecting their sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence and uniting against terrorism. The transition must ensure the continuity and reform of State institutions and public services in the country. That requires an inclusive set of governance arrangements that ensure that power is exercised differently and responsibly from the way it has been until now.

There is also a profound need for accountability. The Government has mercilessly trampled on human rights. Opposition groups have done some of the same. Terrorist groups parade images of their cruelty before the global public with perverse glee. For the world not to pursue the perpetrators of such brutality would be a grave abdication of duty. It would deny Syrian justice and healing. It would shred the credibility of an international community that claims to be concerned about upholding our common humanity.

I note that the Security Council itself has said that those who use chemical weapons in Syria must be held accountable. I repeat my call on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. Members of the Government who gave orders or were part of the chain of command must be brought to account. Others on the battlefield must also be brought into the halls of justice. And there can be no doubt that any durable settlement will have to ensure a proper framework for transitional justice and reconciliation if Syria is to overcome the horrors of this war.

We are at a make-or-break moment. I challenge everyone to use their influence now to restore our cessation of hostilies, enable the delivery of humanitarian assistance everywhere it is needed, and support the United Nations in charting a political path for the Syrians to negotiate a way out of the hell in which they are trapped. In their service as members of the Security Council, those present have no higher responsibility now.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. De Mistura.

Mr. De Mistura: The Secretary-General has spoken powerfully about this terrible conflict and the need to open the road to political talks that focus on the fundamental issues for a viable transition. He has requested that I be ready to present to the parties a draft framework of proposals as a starting point — nothing more than a starting point, but an important starting point — for negotiations for a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political transition. And we are ready. Let me offer now a few observations in this regard. We owe them to the Security Council.

First, we believe that the United Nations has done its due dilligence in order to understand the needs and fears of all sides, even if their own starting positions continue to be distant. Over the past two years, the United Nations has engaged extensively with Syrian stakeholders, whether in Geneva consultations or in three rounds of formal proximity talks, technical discussions. shuttle diplomacy in the region and through the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) and the 18 Special Envoys from all over the world, civil society — and, frankly also to a large extent, with the Syrian Women's Advisory Board — with representatives of Syria. I have taken into account all the input from these engagements.

Secondly, despite the horrors on the ground, we have been pleasantly surprised by the fact that some points of convergence have emerged from the intra-Syrian talks about what essential governing princples should frame the transition and any end-state consititutional arrangement for Syria in the future. These commalities demonstrate how potentially close the visions of each side are, at least on the following point: an open, civil, all-inclusive, non-sectarian, pluralistic, democratic, unified State based upon the rule of law, in which all components of Syrian society are recognized, respected and whose fundamental freedoms are enshrined and protected in a new constitution. These are, at least verbally, what they seem to be agreeing upon.

Thirdly, in the third round of our intra-Syrian talks, both sides have accepted that the agenda was indeed a political transition. The Secretary-General referred to the mediator's summary a few minutes ago, which in fact has captured further commonalities on a transition and set out the issues that need to be addressed to ensure a viable transition. That summary was subsequently endorsed by the ISSG — and I am glad that we have the ISSG; we had been waiting for it for more than a year, and it does provide a lot of support to the Special Envoy, as we were alone before it — as the basis for the next round of intra-Syrian negotiations. The ISSG urged the parties "to reach agreement on a framework for a genuine political transition". It was within this context that on 26 July the ISSG requested that we develop some proposals. As soon as the talks resume, it is my intention to put proposals to all sides as a starting point for negotiations and as a means by which to move to direct talks, and no longer just proximity talks. The Secretary-General has indeed been encouraging me and requesting that I present a draft framework to move the sides towards a transition through negotiation.

Fourthly, any proposal that I may present would proceed upon the basis that the conflict in Syria cannot be resolved militarly — we say that all the time, but sometimes fail to practice it — but rather only through a a Syrian-owned and -led political negotiating process between the Government and the opposition, in which a framework is agreed based upon mutual consent, capable of effecting a genuine and irreversible political transition leading to a new constitution, and free and fair elections under international supervision, while preserving continuity — we are not looking for what happened in Libya, for instance — and reformed State institutions, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015).

Fifthly, in our view, any viable transition must inevitably do the follwing. First, it must address how power is to be exercised in practice by the transitional Government, including in relation to the presidency's executive powers and control over Government and security institutions. This is something that the Syrians have to decide, but they need to address it among them. Secondly, the transition must involve power-sharing and a phased and genuinine power-devolution exercise during transition in an agreed manner in accordance with good governance, principles and subject to domestic and international guarantees. Thirdly, it must require the creation of collective transitional bodies to oversee a national ceasefire, humanitarian relief, the creation of a calm, neutral environment to enable free, peaceful political activity to occur in relation to the adoption of a new constitution, and the holding of free and fair elections under international supervision. I know it seems like a dream, but that is the plan, and if we do not do that it will not be possible to actually get there. Fourthly, it must be accompanied by sustained, international efforts to help reconstruct Syria, discussions are already taking place about how to prepare for reconstructing Syria as soon as genuinine and verifiable transition gets under way.

Therefore, ideally, the Government would need to understand that the transition involves a genuinine devolution of power and not just the absorption of the opposition into the current Government. While the opposition should also understand that the transition is not solely about one person or one presidency, but it is actually related to a transfer not only of power from one political group to another, but actually it is about how

power should be exercised differently as Syria moves forward through Syrian negotiations.

Above all, the sides need to recognize that any transition needs to be all-inclusive and agreed among them — as the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex) clearly states — through mutual consent. I take note of the inputs that we have received from both sides, the Government and the opposition, in this process. I also take note of the High Negotiation Committee's description of its own recent vision statement as a living document, and therefore a document that can evolve. This is the kind of approach that negotiations need to have in order to be developed.

I appeal, therefore, to the Security Council to reflect carefully on what the Secretary-General has just said. It was an important statement. It was a statement that he made by choosing his words carefully, because he feels strongly about this terrible conflict, which has been ongoing for five years of his tenure. I have added a few points and I hope that all Syrian parties understand that if peace is to be made and they are to save their own country, there is a need for a transition that will require a genuine readiness to negotiate and compromise. They should also be present at the next talks. This is an opportunity we would like to offer them.

Let me finish by saying, because obviously we cannot ignore the elephant in the room, that all of this will and can be heavily affected if we build on the agreement reached on 9 September between the two co-Chairs of the ISSG, which gave us a lot of hope, and on the basis of which we have been working even harder to renew talks.

The President: I thank Mr. De Mistura for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Prime Minister of New Zealand.

New Zealand has convened today's high-level meeting on the situation in the Middle East for one simple reason — no other issue more urgently demands the attention of world leaders. The Syrian civil war is the most devastating conflict of the twenty-first century. We see a country shattered, terrorism and extremism rampant, and the daily horrors of the deliberate displacement, starving and killing of civilians. We join the Secretary-General in condemning Monday's attack on a humanitarian convoy. There is no justification for attacking those who are trying to save lives. Longer term, we will need to hold to account those most responsible for the appalling atrocities we have witnessed. This includes those responsible for chemical weapons attacks.

The scale of the Syrian refugee crisis has shocked the world. It has impacted millions of people in the region and beyond. The conflict has created security threats that reach well beyond Syria's borders. After more than five years of violence, Syria has become a byword for failure — failure of the parties and their supporters to put peace and the lives of innocent people ahead of self-interest and zero-sum politics; failure to respond to the crisis early to prevent this tragedy; and a collective political failure, including on the part of the Security Council, to do what must be done to end the conflict.

Today's meeting is a chance for an open and honest discussion on how peace can be achieved. It is critical that we rewrite this narrative of failure and help set Syria on a path to peace. Let me be clear. No one will benefit from a continuation of this conflict. The Syrian Government, which bears responsibility for starting this war, cannot win, nor can the many others whose support is allowing the conflict to continue. Ultimately, Syrians must reach an agreement on their future Government, but at this point it is clear that Syrians by themselves cannot end this war.

The problem is not a lack of direction. The pathway for ending this conflict was set out by the Security Council in resolution 2254 (2015) in December 2015. The resolution identified the steps required: a nationwide ceasefire, negotiations on a political transition and a united front for fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other terrorist groups. It also established a timetable for implementing them, but that timetable itself was never implemented. Today, we all need to commit to restoring the cessation of hostilities, delivering aid to those who need it, and restarting political talks. Last week's arrangement between United States Secretary of State Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov represents the best hope we have seen in some time. We encourage Russia and the United States to show sustained leadership and not let this opportunity slip away.

The next few days will be critical in restoring the cessation of hostilities and getting humanitarian aid flowing. We urge the Syrian parties to abide by the arrangement. The Council should unite to back those

efforts. A political solution needs to address the causes of the conflict and establish a new form of inclusive Government. It must provide more than just cosmetic change with regard to the central question of President Bashar Al-Assad's future. A political solution will involve unpalatable choices for both sides. It will take courage and, most of all, pragmatism. Anyone who insists on political red lines that block the necessary compromises will have to measure the delay they cause in terms of more lives lost, more refugees and more suffering. Those with influence must reinforce the message to the parties and to the Syrian Government that a political solution is the only way out of this conflict, and they must back these words with their actions. This means encouraging the parties to seek outcomes around the negotiating table, rather than on the battlefield. It also means not using the fight against terrorism as an excuse to shift our focus from achieving a political solution. Terrorism is a major consequence of the Syrian war, but it did not cause it.

Those countries with greatest ability to influence events have a particular responsibility in this regard. I speak in particular of those the Secretary-General identified in his General Assembly address last year (see A/70/PV.13) as being key to resolving this conflict: the United States, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. We call on those countries to work together to restore the cessation of hostilities over the next few days. Advancing a political solution must be the priority in the weeks ahead. The people of Syria deserve this much.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): It is clear that the region of the Middle East and North Africa is undergoing a period of serious upheaval as a result of the conjunction of inter-ethnic and inter-religious clashes with the unprecedented eruptions of terrorism and extremism that have enveloped Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Syria and have disturbed a number of other countries, including some in Africa. The potential deterioration of the situation presents the likelihood of increasingly serious threats to international stability and security.

This is hardly the first time that such a state of affairs is the direct consequence of the heinous practice of geopolitical engineering, interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States, and attempts to replace objectionable regimes, including by violent means. It is fair to say that the situation in Syria is particularly worrying. Since the very beginning of the crisis, Russia has consistently advocated an exclusively peaceful solution arrived at while respecting the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of that ancient nation. We continue to believe firmly that there is no alternative to a political process based on a mutually respectful, inclusive intra-Syrian dialogue without preconditions, while ensuring an end to hostilities, the expansion of humanitarian access and a more effective fight against terrorism.

That complex position has been clearly affirmed in the decisions of the International Syria Support Group and the Security Council's resolutions, particularly resolution 2254 (2015). In order to fulfil the provisions of that resolution, Russia and the United States, as co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group, arrived at a specific arrangement, which took more than six months to produce and was completed on 9 September, after the Presidents of Russia and the United States, meeting three days earlier in China, had reached final agreement on the last remaining issues to be resolved.

I apologize for referring to documents that almost no one in the Chamber has seen. As ever, Russia is prepared to make them public and distribute them within the United Nations. It is important to note that the Russian-American agreement emphasizes that one of its key priorities is distinguishing the opposition forces from those of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Jabhat Al-Nusra, in order to put the ceasefire into effect, resolve humanitarian issues and, most importantly, end terrorists' attempts to evade punishment by using the pretext of their cooperation with the so-called moderates participating in the ceasefire regime.

The arrangements came into force on 12 September, and I should say once again that the fact that they are not yet publicly available prevents us from comparing them with what has been done and by whom, but I can give one example. The arrangements required ensuring safe passage for humanitarian access along the Castello Road and that therefore both the Government and the opposition, which were controlling various sectors of that road, should withdraw their forces to an equal distance from the road. That distance was specifically fixed in the agreements. The Government forces began

to withdraw, as required in the Russian-United States agreement, only to see that the opposition was not only not reciprocating but in fact began shelling the Government forces. That happened more than once, and the opposition has still not withdrawn from the Castello Road, as the 9 September agreements required. In general, through its Ministry of Defence, Russia has been continually monitoring the activity on the Castello Road and around Aleppo, and the Ministry's website shows very clearly who is complying with the agreements and who is not.

Last week, through the operational monitoring centre we established in Geneva with our United States partners, we informed our American colleagues about 300 cases of violations of the ceasefire regime by Ahrar Al-Sham and a number of other opposition groups, including some whose names were provided to us as supposedly participating in the ceasefire. There were violations in Aleppo and the provinces of Hama, Homs, Latakia and Dar'a, as well as in the suburbs of Damascus. I would like to stress that the information we passed on is reliable. It comes not from Internet or media reports but was obtained on the ground by Russian military monitoring groups and it corresponds to specific facts. The violations include shelling using light weapons, mortars, multiple rocket launchers and homemade shells. The strikes on 16 September by the opposition coalition against Government forces' positions in Deir ez-Zor were a clear violation of the ceasefire, and as soon as they occurred, ISIL launched an attack on the Government forces. Another unacceptable provocation took place on 19 September, when a United Nations humanitarian convoy was attacked near Aleppo in an opposition-controlled area. It should be noted, by the way, that on that same day, in the same area, known as the Ramusa road, Jabhat Al-Nusra and its allies carried out an aggressive attack on Government forces. As a result, the jihadists were able to make progress in the 10-70 sector.

I do not have any proof, but I am certain that such coincidences should be thoroughly analysed and investigated, particularly the attack on the humanitarian convoy. Many people said that it could have been a rocket or artillery shelling — that was what we were informed originally — and then they started talking about helicopters and then airplanes. I think we should restrain the emotional instinct that makes us instantly reach for the microphone to comment and should rather conduct a thorough, professional investigation. I should mention that the distance between where the incident occurred and the epicentre, to the west of Aleppo, where Al-Nusra is, is no more than five or seven kilometres. Russia has provided all the information it has obtained about the attack on the convoy, including real-time video. In general, in spite of our appeals, which are to be found in Security Council decisions on the importance of exerting influence over the various armed opposition groups, the results have so far been extraordinarily limited.

I mentioned the list provided to us by our American partners of the 150 or so organizations named as participants in the ceasefire regime, but for a long time now, and officially since 12 September, more than 20 of them have declared that they will not comply with the agreement. That list also includes Ahrar Al-Sham, which, by the way, when drafting resolution 2254 (2015), we proposed including on the list of terrorist organizations, together with another group, Jaysh Al-Islam. At the time, however, our partners said that would make it impossible for us to work effectively, and as a gesture of goodwill we decided not to insist on that, limiting the terrorist list to Jabhat Al-Nusra and the so-called Islamic State. Well, after the ceasefire's entry into force, on 12 September, the leadership of Ahrar Al-Sham stated officially that it would not abide by the agreements because they describe Al-Nusra as a terrorist organization. Ahrar Al-Sham does not consider it to be a terrorist organization, and in fact works closely with it.

I believe, therefore, that the time has come to think about revisiting the list of terrorist organizations, especially since a specific incident occurred in the past few days in the north of Hama province, where Syrian forces were defending against attacks by the Jund Al-Aqsa group in the El Khabare and Maan areas. Regarding the fighting there, some have accused the Syrian Government forces of violating the ceasefire, but yesterday the United States stated that it had added Jund Al-Aqsa to the list of terrorist organizations, so I hope that no one will demand that we cease hostilities against that group. I just wanted to mention that example, on top of what I just pointed out about Ahrar Al-Sham, since they will probably require that we revisit the list. There has to be an end to covering up for those who are opposed to peace and refuse to comply with the agreements and with the Security Council's resolutions, and they should be considered equivalent to terrorists. In the past few days, in the Damascus

area, Jaysh Al-Islam has been trying to gain territory in eastern Ghouta, while at the same time there have been intensive attacks on Government forces by Jabhat Al-Nusra and Failak Al-Rahman, which is also working in coordination with Al-Nusra in the suburb of Jobar, from where they often use mortars for shelling civilian neighbourhoods in Damascus.

Another lesson that we should like to draw from the latest events is that, in ensuring security during humanitarian operations, the effective participation of all parties to the conflict is necessary, not only that of Syrian and Russian armed forces, to which everyone usually addresses all appeals and requests. The armed groups and their sponsors need to provide relevant guarantees as well. Representatives of the United Nations also need to escort the convoys after receiving such guarantees.

The International Syria Support Group met yesterday, and many colleagues were present. Everyone spoke in favour of resuscitating the cessation of hostilities. Initially the proposal was to ensure three days of calm. We are convinced that that can be achieved only by all the parties to the Syrian conflict without exception, taking simultaneous, parallel steps. Otherwise, nothing will happen. There will not be any unilateral pauses. We have done that already. There were unilateral pauses around Aleppo for 48 and 72 hours, and each time the result was that the insurgents, including Jabhat Al-Nusra, were provided with re-enforcements and military equipment and ammunition during these periods of calm. We therefore can no longer even discuss unilateral measures.

What is needed is that every single member of the International Syria Support Group, especially those mentioned by the President of the Council, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, need to formulate serious guarantees in order to ensure that those units on the ground on whom they have influence will comply with all the provisions of the cessation of hostilities agreement. If we can agree on that type of comprehensive approach, then I believe that the viability of a cessation of hostilities will have a chance. Of course, it will not be enough to reach an agreement, we will have to make sure that the agreement is actually implemented.

Finally, I would like to say that we have always made a top priority of the intra-Syrian political dialogue, without any preconditions, as demanded by resolution 2254 (2015) and with the participation of representatives of all ethnic and religious groups, in order to implement the road map set out in the resolution, which should lead to a solution to the Syrian crisis within 18 months — as we had hoped at the time. Otherwise, we will not be able to achieve a lasting solution and preserve Syria as a single, territorially integral State, restore its economy and ensure the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

We support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura, and we call on him to continue working with the Syrian parties to the conflict to ensure the continuity and inclusive character of the negotiating process. Attempts by certain participants to put forward preconditions or ultimatums to sabotage resolution 2254 (2015) are unacceptable. Unfortunately, such attempts have continued, and the United Nations and the Special Envoy should not yield to such blackmail. Negotiations should resume urgently. Those who insist on preconditions should be told that such decisions run counter to the demands of the Security Council. We are ready to contribute in every way to the efforts carried out by Mr. De Mistura, including by further working with all parties — the Syrian Government and all members of the opposition — without excluding anyone.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. John Kerry, Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Mr. Kerry (United States of America): I want to thank my colleague from New Zealand in particular for convening this very important meeting on the crisis in Syria. I believe that it is appropriate that we are gathering here a couple of rooms over from where yesterday so many Heads of State came together in what I thought was a remarkably moving and eloquent statement of the consequence of the war in Syria. I listened particularly to King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein talk about the impact on his country and the millions of people who are distorting its economy, putting huge pressures on the social structure of the country, living under the worst circumstances and, in some areas, presenting a threat because of the ability of Da'esh/ the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham or the Al-Nusra Front to slip people in, posing a security threat to the country.

We listened to the young Olympian tell us about her dreams and how she was able to compete this year because of a refugee Olympic team. We saw the images in a video beautifully narrated by Bono that really

made us think about the consequences of that. I hope that everybody will come here today really focused on those consequences and not engage in word games that duck responsibility or avoid the choices that this great institution has in front of it with respect to war and peace and life and death.

I listened to my colleague from Russia, and I felt as though I were in a parallel universe here. He said that nobody should have any preconditions to come to the table. Well, we twice met in Vienna. We met here in New York and embraced a Security Council resolution. We met again in Munich. And in each place, the International Syria Support Group and the Security Council embraced a ceasefire applicable to all parties. That is not a precondition. That is an international agreement — arrived at four times. Countries have said that they will do this, and four times it has been shredded by independent actors and spoilers who do not want a ceasefire. That is therefore not a precondition.

How can people go sit at a table with a regime that bombs hospitals, drops chlorine gas — again and again and again and again and again and again — and acts with impunity? Are you supposed to sit there and have happy talk in Geneva under such circumstances, when you have signed to a ceasefire and do not adhere to it? What kind of credibility do you have with any of your people? It is not a precondition. It is something upon which we all agreed in the United Nations and the International Syria Support Group.

I have to say with regard to the documents that we are prepared release — as we told people and announced yesterday at the International Syria Support Group, and people in the Support Group have the documents — you do not need to read them to understand that it is against international law to bomb hospitals. You do not need the documents to understand that you do not drop barrel bombs on children. Those are flagrant violations of international law.

Therefore, I do not want to obfuscate this process. I did not come here this morning to do that. Supposedly, we all want the same goal — I have heard that again and again. Russia, Iran, the United States, Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia — everybody sits here and says that they want a united Syria: secular and respectful of the rights of all people, and where the people of Syria can choose their leadership. However, we are proving woefully inadequate in our ability to get to the table, to have that conversation, to make it happen. Everybody in this Chamber understands that there are proxies at this table and proxies outside of the Chamber — and we know who they are — who have the ability to have an impact on the players in this conflict that has provided the greatest humanitarian catastrophe since the Second World War.

Let us review the sequence of events. I was privileged to serve in the United States Senate with a fellow who spent a lot of time here: he was the Ambassador of the United States to the United Nations, Daniel Patrick Moynihan. He would famously remind us that everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but they are not entitled to their own facts. As President John Adams once said, "facts are stubborn things". If we are going to deal with this situation, I do not think that we can let anybody here have their own set of facts about Syria.

Everybody here understands the depth of the human tragedy. One wonders why people in various parts of the world are so angry about governance: it is because all they hear are words. We know how many times we have demanded action, which then does not take place. Therefore, I want to share some facts with you this morning. Last night we received reports of air strikes that hit a medical facility near Aleppo and four aid workers were killed, despite the fact there was supposed to be a cessation of hostilities. There are only two countries that have aeroplanes that are capable of flying during the night — or flying at all — in that particular area: Russia and Syria.

As Minister Lavrov said, let us examine the facts and see what happened. On Monday, 20 aid workers were killed in an outrageous sustained two-hour attack directed at a fully authorized humanitarian mission near Aleppo. All of the permits had been given, and everybody was on notice. That attack has dealt a very heavy blow to our efforts to bring peace to Syria, and it raises a profound doubt about whether Russia and the Al-Assad regime can or will live up to the obligations that they agreed to in Geneva.

Questions are also raised — not by that attack but by other events — about some of the opposition. Those are facts. The simple reality is that we cannot resolve this crisis if the major parties who come to the table and agree to do something are unwilling to do what is necessary to avoid escalation. We do not get anywhere by ignoring the facts and by denying common sense. The United States-led coalition did hit people on Saturday;

it was a terrible accident, and within moments of it happening we acknowledged it. We did not cast out a series of obfuscating facts, instead we said that it was a terrible thing and that it happened. The United States Department of Defence apologized, and we tried to find out how it happened.

But people with guns running around on the ground, seen from the air, is a very different thing from trucks in a convoy with big United Nations markings all over them. I want to lay out those facts because they underscore why, at this moment, we just cannot do business as usual. We cannot walk out of this Chamber and say that we are going to try to continue to have a ceasefire, when everybody knows it cannot work. The facts require countries to restore credibility to this process. That is what is critical. Let us think about what happened in the last couple of days.

First, President Putin's Press Secretary, Dmitry Peskov, claimed that the attack on the humanitarian convoy was somehow a necessary response to an alleged offensive by al-Nusra elsewhere in the country: that was the first claim. Then a Russian ambassador said that Russian and Syrian forces were not bombing the area, but that they were targeting the village of Khan Tuman. Then we heard a completely different story: the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation said that the aid convoy had been accompanied by militants in a pick-up truck with a mortar, of which we have, however, seen no evidence. In any case, that would not justify a violation of the cessations of hostilities. In addition, that mortar could never have inflicted the damage caused to those trucks.

Then the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation switched completely and denied Russia's involvement. According to Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov, "neither Russia nor Syria conducted air strikes on the United Nations humanitarian convoy in the southwestern outskirts of Aleppo". Then Konashenkov went further and said that the damage to the convoy was the direct result of the cargo catching fire, that the trucks and the food and the medicine just spontaneously combusted. Does anybody here believe that? This is not a joke we are involved in. We are in serious business here. If we can stand up and say that we did accidentally have a strike, then we should have some responsibility. Maybe it is an attempt to distract attention or somehow deflect the issue, but I think what it underscores is that we have a responsibility here to find a way forward.

Everything I just quoted from Russian sources is contradicted by public information, by conclusions already reached by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, independent journalists and aid workers on the ground, by eyewitnesses. The eyewitnesses will tell you what happened. One of them said that he was standing on the ground, and all of a sudden the place became hell and the fighter jets were in the sky. That is an eyewitness report; the place turned into hell, and fighter jets were in the sky.

There is a lot more that I am not going to go into because I really want the key here to be an acceptance of responsibility, so that we can change this equation, responsibility on the part of everybody here. The primary question is no longer what do we know; the primary question is, collectively, what are we going to do about it?

In other words, this is a moment of truth. It is a moment of truth for President Putin and Russia, it is also a moment of truth for the opposition. It is a moment of truth for the people who support the opposition. For too long some elements of the opposition have relied on an unholy alliance with Al-Nusra. Al-Nusra is Al-Qaida — Al-Qaida's branch in Syria. We cannot look the other way if some groups are on the ground fighting alongside Al-Nusra, an organization that overtly rejects a political solution to this crisis and is an enemy of all of us in this Chamber.

It is a moment of truth for the international community, too. If we allow spoilers to choose the path for us, we will encounter a path of escalation. If we decide not to do what it takes to make this cessation of hostilities work, then make no mistake, my friends, the next time we convene here we are going to be facing a Middle East with even more refugees, more dead, more displaced, more extremists and more suffering on an even greater scale. That is a certainty.

There is only one choice, and that is to get to that table with Staffan de Mistura, to get to a negotiation and get a ceasefire so that we can stop the flow of refugees, stop the suffering, and provide the people of Syria with a chance to breathe, a chance to live. When the ceasefire first began, a few weeks ago, guess what: it worked. Months ago, people were actually out in the streets; they went to cafés again. Some people even demonstrated, felt they had political rights. Other people were able to walk from one place to another with a sense of safety. All of that has dissipated.

I want to emphasize this, and I emphasize to Russia that the United States continues to believe that there is a way forward, which, although rocky and difficult and uncertain, can provide the most viable path out of the carnage. Our shared task here is to find a way to use the tools of diplomacy to make that happen. That is exactly what we have been trying to accomplish.

For weeks over the summer, experts from my Government worked with our counterparts from Russia in good efforts to develop a plan that would take into account the lessons learned from the original cessation of hostilities. The key elements of that plan, launched in Geneva two weeks ago, include the renewal of the cessation of hostilities, excluding only Da'esh and Al-Nusra. Importantly, it included arrangements for the unfettered delivery — unfettered delivery — of humanitarian aid to people in Aleppo and elsewhere in the country. It also envisioned the possibility — provided that the delivery of humanitarian assistance was unimpeded and sustained and provided that there were at least seven days of consecutive adherence to the cessation of hostilities — that the United States and Russia would begin to coordinate their efforts against Da'esh and Al-Nusra.

I wish to make one thing clear. Under President Obama's orders, all preparations were being made in order to achieve that cooperation, involving our military and intelligence community in the work we would do. We are committed to that. It was also a very importantly part of the plan that, when those efforts of cooperation commenced, Syrian warplanes would be prohibited from flying over areas where the legitimate opposition and Al-Nusra were present in order to give us an opportunity to work at separating the two.

I have said to Russia many times: it is very hard to separate people when they are being bombed indiscriminately. While Al-Assad has the right to determine whom he is going to bomb, because he can "go after Al-Nusra" and in the process go after the opposition at the same time because he wants to, confusion is created that is impossible to separate out, and the ceasefire cannot be preserved. That is why we need to get to the prohibition on flying, my friends. That would prevent Syria from doing what it has done so often in the past, which is to attack civilian targets with the excuse that it is just going after Al-Nusra.

Our purpose in the negotiation was to put an end to the kind of horrific and indiscriminate attacks that have been the primary cause of fear, suffering and displacement. Under our plan, all of this could be quickly accompanied by serious negotiations between the parties aimed at a political transition and a conclusion to the conflict. So I wish my colleagues to know that the United States remains convinced that the objectives outlined in the Geneva agreement are the right objectives. As for the tools, many of them are the right tools, but they may not be complete.

Our hope was that the renewal of the cessation of hostilities and the resumption of aid deliveries, the isolation of Al-Nusra and Da'esh, and the beginning of the Syrian-led negotiation process would provide a pathway out of the conflict and make possible the restoration of a peaceful Syria. Now, clearly there are some people, including Al-Assad and his allies, as well as Al-Nusra and Da'esh on the other side, who fear that very outcome. Al-Assad is a spoiler; he does not believe in a ceasefire. Al Nusra and Da'esh are spoilers. They do not want a ceasefire; they want to keep fighting Al-Assad.

Therefore, the question for us here today is whether we bend to their will or continue to pursue our agenda, as best we can and in every way that we can, to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict. Those who believe that the crisis in Syria cannot become even worse are dead wrong, as are those who believe that a military victory is possible. This could be like Carthage and the Romans, if one can call that a victory.

The plan announced in Geneva is far from perfect, but I have yet to hear an alternative that is remotely realistic and would lead to a better outcome. If we could get monitoring on the ground, that would be ideal. We would love to have monitoring on the ground. But most of the countries one talks to and asks if they would go in to monitor are very quick to say, "not on my life".

As my colleagues from the International Syria Support Group will attest, yesterday we had a meeting. There was near unanimity in that room that this process, the ceasefire, as troubled as it is, gives us the best chance available to bring relief to the people of Syria. Now, here is the nub of it. We have said for days that it will take significant and immediate steps now to try to get things back on track. How do we get things back on track? How do we restore the concept of a ceasefire? How do we give people, who have again and again seen this process fall apart, some sense of confidence in the process? Believe me, there are a lot of people who

believe that it cannot happen. There are some people who believe that the major parties do not want it done.

So, I believe that in order to restore credibility to the process, we must move forward to try to immediately ground all aircraft flying in those key areas in order to de-escalate the situation and give a chance for humanitarian assistance to flow unimpeded. If that happens, there is a chance to give credibility back to this process. In Geneva, Russia related that Al-Assad was prepared to live by the cessation of hostilities and would accept the idea of not flying over agreed-upon areas. But because of what has happened in the past few days, my friends, we have no choice but to try to do that sooner, not later, to move immediately to restore confidence and demonstrate the readiness to implement a genuine ceasefire now.

The future of Syria is hanging by a thread. I urge the Council not to give up, but instead to support the steps outlined by the United States and Russia in Geneva. I call on every party in Syria and those who support them. I call on all members of the opposition to cooperate and revive this plan. I call on every country to cease providing support of any kind to any party that is trying to sabotage this plan. I call on the international community to support United Nations efforts to begin a real negotiation in Geneva on a political transition that can provide the only durable route to peace. I urge the entire international community to get behind the best chance that we have had yet to reduce the violence, to provide humanitarian assistance and to open up the space for negotiations.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, President of Egypt.

President Al Sisi (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Let me begin by thanking Mr. John Key, Prime Minister of New Zealand, for convening this meeting.

I would like to express my deepest condolences to United Nations workers who were targeted by a cowardly attack two days ago while trying to fulfil their mission to bring humanitarian assistance to civilians. That should not go uncontested.

We are here today not merely to examine the heartbreaking tragedy in Syria, which we have all been following on a daily basis, but rather to assume our responsibility as member States of the Security Council, charged with the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security and to find a practical and swift formula to stop the bloodshed in Syria and to bring an end to the five years of conflict and reach a unified vision for a comprehensive solution to the Syrian crisis — one that rescues our brethren in Syria from their prolonged ordeal.

Five years have passed, and the bloodshed in Syria has not stopped, with hundreds of thousands of Syrians killed and with millions of refugees and internally displaced persons. The political solution remains elusive. Syria continues to suffer the rapacity of regional and international parties that are seeking to exploit its predicament for their own narrow interests, thereby creating a breeding ground for vicious terrorism, which is hijacking the future of Syria.

Allow me to speak frankly about what I believe to be the root causes of the problem and the inherent flaws in prior attempts to contain the crisis. An honest and critical reading of the Syrian crisis over the past five years is imperative if we are to overcome our differences and move forward to save Syria and its people. I would like to summarize my remarks in three key points.

First, any honest and fair reading of the previous attempts to deal with the Syrian crisis thus far leads us to one conclusion: we have become overly preoccupied with the symptoms rather than the root causes of the problem. We continue to be consumed in recurring debates on reaching interim arrangements, ceasefires or cessations of hostilities to reduce the killing and destruction, or in attempts to alleviate the ensuing humanitarian disaster, and so forth. We have failed, however, to move forward in addressing the core problem, which is the absence of a just and comprehensive political solution that takes into account the legitimate aspirations of the people of Syria.

We welcome the cessation of hostilities reached a few days ago thanks to the efforts of Russia and the United States. This cessation of hostilities led to a decrease in violence despite certain violations and the refusal of certain parties, supported by the outside, to uphold their responsibilities, and insisting on hijacking the future of Syria. Despite all of those violations, the agreement was necessary to reduce violence. However, such an agreement in itself is not enough. It must be complemented by an immediate resumption of political negotiations in order to reach a just, final and comprehensive solution to the Syrian crisis. I hereby call upon Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura to invite

all parties to the next round of negotiations as soon as possible.

Secondly, the broad outlines of any political solution in Syria are quite obvious. However, transforming those outlines into practical measures on the ground requires upholding the principles of the national unity and territorial integrity of Syria and maintaining equality among each of its citizens across the political and social spectrums, with the single exception of terrorist organizations, which cannot have a place in the future of Syria that we all hope for. There is no place for terrorism in Syria, nor is there room for attempts to re-brand the terrorist organizations. We therefore categorically reject any attempts to circumvent Security Council resolutions that designate those groups as terrorist organizations.

Thirdly, it is important that we recognize that we are running short of time. Every day that passes by with Syria's wounds still open offers yet another opportunity for terrorism to flourish and for sectarianism to undermine the foundations of the nation-State in Syria and the Levant. Let me be honest: anyone who thinks that there can be a military solution to the Syrian crisis is mistaken, and anyone who believes that terrorist organizations can play a role in Syria's future is delusional.

Our experiences during the Geneva and Vienna meetings and with resolution 2254 (2015) have proved beyond any doubt that finding common ground among the key stakeholders of the Syrian crisis is not impossible and that we can make significant progress towards a political settlement in record time should there be a political will to do so.

Egypt's experience in hosting an all-inclusive conference for the various moderate Syrian opposition groups in June 2015, which brought together Syrians from across the political spectrum, with no foreign interference, has shown that these parties can agree on comprehensive documents that draw a road map for the transition out of the current plight in Syria. The Cairo Conference documents were produced by Syrians without any interference from a non-Syrian party. They clearly demonstrate that it is possible to find a Syrian solution to the crisis. Council members must have all noticed that these documents have been the foundation of every subsequent effort, Syrian or international, to put forward a practical political settlement.

The road ahead is clear. The implementation of the cessation of hostilities should be developed into a comprehensive ceasefire in Syria, which would, in turn, guarantee the free passage of humanitarian assistance to civilians in besieged and hard-to-reach areas. As Council members know, Egypt has succeeded in delivering humanitarian aid on two occasions to more than five besieged areas in Syria, thanks to our open channels of communications with all the different parties and stakeholders. We continue to count on the commitment of all parties to the agreement on the cessation of hostilities as a necessary step towards easing the humanitarian tragedy and delivering aid to those affected by the conflict.

We reaffirm our readiness to provide all kinds of support to this endeavour. However, the revival of serious political negotiations remains a necessary condition for the cessation of hostilities to hold and for humanitarian access to continue. History has taught us that no ceasefire arrangements have ever endured without a political prospect that addresses the root causes of the crisis. Syria is no exception.

Egypt's vision of a solution in Syria is based on two pillars. First, the national unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian State must be preserved and the collapse of its institutions prevented. Secondly, the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people to rebuild their own State through an acceptable political solution that represents them all and creates an enabling environment for reconstruction efforts must be upheld. From this point of view, we value the efforts of Special Envoy De Mistura and we support his work for the resumption of political negotiations immediately and without delay. In that context, we reaffirm the importance of including representatives from the Syrian Government together with all opposition groups without discrimination in the negotiations, in order for the negotiations to bear fruit, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015).

We have no more time to lose. With the passing of each day more blood will be spilled and more innocent Syrians will continue to suffer. Egypt remains eager to communicate with all parties to the Syrian crisis and is committed to working with our partners in the region and the international community to provide every kind of support for the much-needed political solution in Syria. It is our collective responsibility to restore hope to the people of Syria. It is time for us to assume this responsibility and tackle the root causes of the problem immediately and without any delay.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine.

President Poroshenko: First of all, I would like to thank Prime Minister Key for his initiative to convene this important high-level meeting. I also commend the presidency of New Zealand for the excellent manner in which it has organized the work of the Security Council this month.

The Security Council was created 71 years ago to bear the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It was meant to stop ongoing conflicts and prevent looming ones. Back in 2000, upon the initiative of Ukraine, the Council held its historic, first-ever summit meeting (see S/PV.4194), in which it adopted a declaration pledging, inter alia,

> "to ensure the effective functioning of the collective security system established by the Charter" (*resolution 1318 (2000), annex*). That summit became one of many success stories throughout the history of the United Nations.

Yet, there have been many dramatic failures. One of them has been unfolding in front of us in Syria for over five years. The conflict in that country is a tragedy for millions of people and a serious challenge for the international community. Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed; over 13 million have been forced out of their homes. These numbers are appalling, and all the more so when we think of the countless personal tragedies behind them.

The conflict has already had many serious negative consequences: uncontrolled migration, the escalation of terrorism, the expansion of the Islamic State and other extremist groups, to name but a few. Yet it poses other serious risks, including igniting a wider sectarian war in the region. We are of the view that the Syrian Government bears full responsibility for its country's present condition and for the terrible sufferings of the Syrian people.

It was with the utmost dismay that we learned just two days ago of a barbaric attack on a humanitarian convoy in Aleppo. That crime came after the Syrian regime's unilateral withdrawal from the week-long ceasefire. It is nothing but a clear proof of the culture of impunity that has fuelled the Syrian conflict. That outrageous lack of accountability is a stain on this Council.

At the same time, it is external support for the Al-Assad regime, in particular from Russia, that has contributed significantly to the disastrous status quo and to the recurrent waves of violence. As was the case in Ukraine, those actions were part of an intentional policy to first stir up hostilities, raise the stakes and then offer yourself as a mediator in the settlement process. In the meantime, you may grab ground and secure your position for imposing any solution you please. That strategy sounds pretty familiar to my own country, Ukraine, which continues to be a testing ground for very similar Russian tactics.

The United Nations and the Security Council have failed to bring peace and security to Syria. That failure undermines the whole mission of the United Nations and challenges its very existence. The inaction of the Council in dealing with the armed Russian aggression against Ukraine and the occupation of Crimea has allowed Moscow to use the peninsula as a military outpost for projecting power in Syria. As war there rages on, huge numbers of Russian war assets are deployed to Syria via ships based in Crimea, occupied by Russian troops. That highlights once again the absolutely urgent and critical need to reform the Council, particularly with regard to the veto power. No veto should be able to block the Council's action when it has to respond to situations of mass atrocities. With so many lives lost in recent decades due to such crimes, we must finally start the process of removing that obstacle to ensure a more effective Security Council.

We strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons, barrel bombs, torture and other crimes being committed in Syria, specifically against civilians. Again, these are flagrant violations of international law. We insist that those responsible for these horrific crimes be brought to justice. The recent findings of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism must be duly taken into account by the international community. Furthermore, we condemn the denial of humanitarian access to those in need — let along the bombing of aid convoys — and sieges against civilian population. Any and all employment of such tactics as a tool of war is a serious violation of international humanitarian law and must be stopped immediately.

Ukraine once again reaffirms the imperative of full compliance with the fundamental principles and norms of international law everywhere, at all times and by all. The political process in Syria should be aimed

at restoring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country and establishing a credible, inclusive transitional governing body with ample executive power. That should be done in full compliance with the Geneva principles of 30 June 2012 and resolution 2254 (2015). That is to be followed by the drafting of a new constitution and elections.

A genuine political transition should be the first and foremost priority for the Council and for all those involved. The parties to the conflict, both inside and outside Syria, will have to prove with deeds — not words — that they are committed to meeting their obligations and to fulfilling their agreements, including the most recent. We are convinced that there is no alternative to a diplomatic solution of the conflict and call for consolidating international efforts to put an end to this tragedy.

Sixteen years ago, in the declaration I referred to at the beginning of my statement, our predecessors pledged, "to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations in addressing conflict" (*resolution 1318 (2000), annex, p.2*). We cannot afford to fail this time.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal.

President Sall (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank Prime Minister Key for convening this timely high-level debate on the human tragedy ravaging the Syrian people. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his recent briefing and Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura.

Whatever one's point of view on the Syrian conflict, which is entering its sixth year, there is one clear image in all of our minds — a country ravaged by war; a country in ruins; a land of fire, tears and blood. The situation in Syria is one of the worst humanitarian disasters of our time. Over 300,000 dead have left behind broken families scarred by mourning and suffering, and there is no end to the gruesome accounts emerging. How many orphans, how many widows, how many elderly people abandoned to their sad fate without any assistance, how many wounded and disabled for life, how many refugees and displaced people have been created? No one really knows.

What is happening in Syria is untenable. Meeting after meeting takes place, negotiation after negotiation is held, and resolution after resolution is adopted while thunderous bombs continue. Human lives have been devastated and homes, markets, schools and hospitals destroyed, in total violation of international humanitarian law. Despite the laudable efforts of humanitarian organizations of goodwill, an entire people is dying and the economy and above the centuries-old sociocultural heritage of an entire country is collapsing. How much longer can this go on?

The cause that gathers us under one roof at the United Nations is peace, which is not only desirable but necessary. It is mandatory and it is achievable. The price of peace is never higher than the cost of war. It is certainly Senegal's hope that a negotiated solution to the Syrian crisis is still possible. We saw evidence of that recently with the first ceasefire agreement on which the Russians and the Americans were able to agree. Regrettably, it was quickly breached, but if both were to take the necessary measures and shoulder their share of responsibility in the tragedy, I believe that they would be able to assist the Security Council in discharging its mission.

In Africa, we say that when two elephants fight, the grass suffers. The Security Council has reached its limits. No resolution can be drafted because of the right of veto. That is why the Security Council must be reformed. Could a veto be vetoed, perhaps, when there is a risk of genocide or crimes against humanity? Should we allow the right of veto to prevent humankind from ending the situation unfolding right in front of us? We see the impact of the movement of Syrian refugees to Europe. Many democracies could crumble under the weight of extremism. We see its effects in North Africa — terrorism is taking place in Syria and Libya and has reached the Sahel and Somalia. Should we wait until the world collapses under the weight of the Syrian crisis to act? I believe that it is time for the Council to take up the tools it needs to discharge its mission and end the conflict.

Senegal supports the efforts of the International Syria Support Group and all efforts needed to achieve effective and lasting peace throughout Syria and to allow for the unimpeded access of humanitarian assistance. We also support the establishment of a joint command centre for information-sharing and improved cooperation to combat terrorism. I welcome Egypt's proposals, which could very much assist its neighbours in the quest for peaceful solutions. Senegal welcomes the adoption of a joint, consistent, global strategy to

ensure that the terrorists who are driven out of Syria are unable to settle elsewhere in North Africa, in particular, and in the Sahelo-Saharan region.

Similarly, peace must be made among all Syrian parties in good faith towards a political solution to the conflict. Such peace is possible because war cannot be the future of an entire people. I hope for momentum in the Russian-American dialogue because peace will depend on a serious agreement being reached between those two great countries. We should reflect on the wisdom of a great man of the twentieth century, John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Fifty-three years ago, in this very Organization, he himself delivered the following words, "Mankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to mankind" (*A/PV.1013, para. 40*). Let us make the right decisions.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan.

Mr. Abe (Japan) (*spoke in Japanese; English text provided by the delegation*): Our agenda today, the situation in Syria, is an urgent one. This ongoing international crisis requires a show of solidarity from the Security Council. We discussed Syria at the Group of Seven (G-7) Ise-Shima Summit this year and confirmed the importance of cooperation among G-7 members. Today, I would like to reaffirm our commitment in the Security Council.

We deeply deplore the situation that the nationwide cessation of hostilities based on the agreement between the United States and Russia is in danger. The International Syria Support Group was convened yesterday and the commitment was reaffirmed that the international community as a whole will support the agreement. Japan took part in that commitment. The Security Council must strongly promote the transition to a political process in which violence is ceased and humanitarian access is improved under the leadership of Special Envoy, Mr. Staffan de Mistura.

The joint investigation of the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons identified those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria last month. This month, it was reported that chlorine-based attacks were conducted in Syria. The use of chemical weapons is utterly unacceptable in any circumstances. The Security Council must unite in order to hold perpetrators to account and bring those responsible to justice. As a member of the Security Council and the International Syria Support Group, Japan calls on the international community and all relevant stakeholders to fully abide by the Security Council's Syria-related resolutions.

In collaboration with the United Nations and other international organizations, Japan has provided non-military assistance and aided in creating as conducive a climate as possible for the political settlement of the Syrian crisis. Japan has supported efforts to build societies that are resilient against violent extremism by combining urgent humanitarian assistance with development assistance for the people of Syria and neighbouring countries. That support has centred on three areas.

First, Japan has extended assistance to all Syrians inside and outside of Syria. Secondly, Japan has provided support to vocational training and capacity-building programmes for women. Thirdly, Japan has provided assistance to alleviate the burdens faced by neighbouring countries in support of regional stability. It is especially important to bolster efforts to build societies that are resilient against violent extremism. In collaboration with the United Nations, Japan has supported territories liberated from violent extremism in order to promote stabilization. We have provided assistance to people who are socially marginalized and have not received even basic assistance.

As one example, Japan has collaborated with the United Nations Development Programme to implement the Emergency Employment Project in northern Jordan, where the unemployment rate has risen amid a wave of Syrian refugees. That project has supported job-seeking and business ventures for more than 1,000 young people. Nadia, a Jordanian woman, recalled, "I cannot forget the moment when I heard over the phone that I had been accepted to participate in the project". Nadia, who has three children, acquired the necessary knowledge to start a business and decided to open a kitchen utensil store. We believe that promoting women's social participation and developing a sense of involvement among young people are effective means to create resilient and tolerant societies and to prevent violent extremism.

With that in mind, Japan provided more than $1.26 billion to Syria, Iraq and neighbouring countries from 2011 to 2015. In addition, Japan is implementing $1.13 billion of assistance to Syria, Iraq and neighbouring countries this year. Japan is focusing in particular on implementing humanitarian aid, including

the provision of food, water and vaccinations, as well as assistance for economic development and social stability, including education and vocational training in collaboration with the United Nations and other international organizations.

However, the success of Japan's efforts depends on how we resolve the current Syrian crisis. Japan reiterates its determination, as a member of the Security Council, to work on the matter in a responsible manner because, first of all, a ceasefire is absolutely important. Once again, Japan will continue to work on this issue.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs of Malaysia.

Mr. Hamidi (Malaysia): I thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting and presiding over the Council today. Malaysia believes that this meeting is especially timely and important in the light of the most recent development in Syria.

I take this opportunity to place on record my delegation's appreciation for New Zealand's strong leadership, alongside Egypt and Spain, particularly on the Council's efforts to address the humanitarian dimension of the Syrian conflict.

My delegation wishes to underscore its deepest appreciation and respect for the unflagging efforts of the United Nations in spearheading the international response to the Syrian crisis. In this connection, I thank both the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for their presence and participation today.

Malaysia is horrified and outraged by the attack on the United Nations-backed humanitarian convoys near Aleppo on Monday night. We strongly condemn the killing of unarmed civilians and humanitarian workers in that incident as yet another flagrant violation of international law, which reflects the absolute disrespect, disregard and contempt that the parties to the conflict have for the values of humankind.

Malaysia stands in solidarity with other friends of Syria in helping to alleviate the situation of its citizens amid this grim reality. In this regard, we have taken certain steps, including making modest, direct financial and in-kind contributions to Syrians in need, especially those in the border areas. We have also committed to taking several thousand Syrians fleeing the violence in their homeland, and I am pleased to share with the Council the fact that this initiative has been implemented.

The bloody and protracted conflict in Syria continues to sorely test the Council's ability to unite around a common approach for a credible and sustainable political solution to the crisis. Since 2011, the conflict has metastasized, spawning a humanitarian crisis of immense proportions that we are all struggling to contain, as well as provided space and an enabling environment for the cancerous growth of terrorism, most notably the rise of Da'esh, whose heinous acts and barbaric atrocities have reverberated far across the globe.

Against that background, the Council must remain resolute and continue to strive for unity and coherence in both its purpose and action in order to effectively discharge its Charter-mandated responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. In noting the various formats pursued in the process of seeking to resolve the Syrian conflict, I wish to underscore that the Council can never be sidelined and has a central role to play.

At this critical stage, despite some highly publicized setbacks in recent days, the Russia-United States package of agreements reached on 9 September represents the latest concrete effort towards, first, halting the violence and subsequently laying the groundwork for a credible and inclusive political process on the future of Syria.

We have also listened very carefully to the views of the Secretary-General and Special Envoy De Mistura on a possible power-sharing agreement between the parties to the conflict. We understand that the primary aim of these proposals is to end the hostilities, an aim that we strongly support.

As a current member of the Council, Malaysia's support for the implementation of its decisions on Syria is unwavering, especially those related to the cessation of violence and on the humanitarian situation.

Particular attention must be given to the protection of children as the most vulnerable group in any violent conflict. We were shocked to the core by the bombing of a maternity hospital in Idlib, which sent babies crashing to the floor in their incubators. We winced at images of children gasping for their last breath after being attacked with chemical weapons; and we were heartbroken by the sight of 5-year-old Omran Daqneesh, covered in dust and blood, sitting quietly,

alone and in shock, waiting in an ambulance after he was pulled from the rubble of his family home; many others, sadly, did not make it out alive.

Despite the countless horrific incidents of children being bombed, gassed and starved, the parties to the conflict in Syria seem to have wilfully jettisoned all reason and humanity, unable to say "enough is enough" so as to prevent more casualties, especially of children. We strongly demand that the conflicting parties respect international humanitarian law, particularly in providing unfettered humanitarian access and in protecting civilians and civilian objects, including children, relief or rescue personnel, schools and hospitals.

While the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) remains relevant, Malaysia is of the view that moving the political process forward should be guided by the provisions of resolution 2254 (2015), taken in parallel with the implementation of the 9 September Russia-United States arrangement. We call on all interested partners and stakeholders to support the way forward as outlined by Special Envoy De Mistura.

Finally, I wish to underscore that Malaysia remains committed to seeking accountability for the various violations and abuses committed in the course of the conflict in Syria. We stand ready to cooperate with all interested partners, and we will support initiatives towards this end.

I wish to also convey Malaysia's utmost appreciation and respect to the many United Nations system and other humanitarian actors and agencies, toiling untiringly in the field and bringing some measure of hope and dignity to a war-ravaged people.

We can never hope to repay such a debt; however, it behoves all of us to redouble our efforts to achieve a durable political solution, so that the guns will fall silent and that peace, reconciliation and rebuilding of the Syrian nation can soon commence.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Delcy Eloína Rodríguez Gómez, Minister of People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Ms. Rodríguez Gómez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Today, as we celebrate the International Day of Peace, is the ideal moment to examine the situation in a sisterly country that is part of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, that is, the Syrian Arab Republic.

This year, 3 September, which was just a few days ago, marked exactly a year since the dissemination of an image that shocked the international community: that of the lifeless body of the child Aylan Kurdi, on a beach in Turkey. That image truly prodoundly touched the human conscience, embodying as it does the humanitarian tragedy that the country is living through: 300,000 deaths; 6.6 million internally displaced persons; 13.5 million people in situations of humanitarian emergency; and 4.8 million refugees. The international community, and we deeply regret having to say this, has become accustomed to such numbers as if they were a normal part of daily life. We have lost the humanitarian dimension in what is really happening in the situation in Syria. The question is how we got to this point. It was not due to happenstance or divine intervention. It was because of the interference of international Powers that have violated international law through violation of Syria's sovereignty, its independence and the fundamental purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and sought to overthrow a legitimate Government, ignoring the desire of the Syrian people.

We have not arrived at this point by chance. We have heard about the use of chemical weapons. We must seek the truth because, while the international community has many regrets, it has also been the victim of imperial lies. Or have we perhaps forgotten the case of Iraq, where supposed existence of weapons of mass destruction led to military intervention in that country in the Middle East. That was not done to provide happiness, progress or development but, rather, to sow violence, death and destruction. The only goal was to grab the natural resources and energy resources of that fraternal country, which is also a member of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The international community cannot continue to be subjected to lies sold by the centres of Power through the international media conglomerates. I have heard here that citizens are tired of their Governments. No, we citizens are not tired of our Governments. Citizens are tired of certain Powers attempting to govern the world. That is what we are tired of. We are tired of the lack of norms and regulations, because in our Governments we comply with the multilateral system of the United Nations and abide by international treaties.

Just a few days ago, on Saturday, 17 September, when we met in Margarita at the historic Summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, we painfully

witnessed with shock an attack by the United States against the army of a brotherly country, Syria. That incident facilitated the advance of terrorist groups on the ground. How many more such mistakes will we see? It is very easy to state afterwards that mistakes were made. But such mistakes cost hundreds of thousands and even millions of human lives. We cannot simply remain silent before such a situation when we are told that mistakes have been made. There are those who are responsible for the mistakes and we have called on the Security Council to take action.

When we see that terrorist groups are trying to take the place of a legitimate Governments and to disregard the will of the people, we ask ourselves, in this place, where we are in charge of the maintenance of international peace and security, who is supporting them, who provides weapons and who finances the logistical support for terrorists? Those are truths that cannot be hidden. Or must we wait another 10 years before the truth is known?

One cannot continue to lie to the world so shamelessly and immorally. Clearly, in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we see that our Constitution considers the development of peace not only as a founding principle, but a fundamental right. We advocate for the right of the Syrian people to peace and development and for safeguardng their right to sovereignty. In that regard, we would join any effort to promote a peaceful political solution, based above all on respect for the Syrian Arab Republic's State institutions and on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that brotherly country.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Rodolfo Nin Novoa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay.

Mr. Nin Novoa (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank the New Zealand presidency for convening this informative, high-level meeting to address the challenges of one of the main threats to international peace and security, namely, the current conflict in Syria, on which we have focussed since the very beginning. Uruguay particularly appreciates this meeting because we are convinced that the Security Council can do much more to mobilize the necessary political will with a view to achieving negotiated long-term solutions for the Syrian people.

Every three months, the Council meets to analyse the situation in the Middle East. At each of those meetings, all Council members emphatically express the urgent need to find solutions to the crisis. Also at those meetings, my country has stressed the serious humanitarian crisis facing the Syrian people and the need to move towards sustainable political solutions. We have agreed on the need to take measures in that regard. However, we meet again today to discuss what more we can do and should do.

We are concerned that, despite the efforts made at the international level, we have not achieved effective solutions to respond to the current conflict. We have not been able to overcome the obstacles to achieving lasting peace, or to end the suffering of millions of people. After five years of conflict, we continue to witness the loss of thousands of innocent lives. We have seen violations of all human rights of the civilian population. We have observed the use of warfare tactics such as hunger. We have struggled to overcome existing obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid to those most in need. Worst of all, we have witnessed indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets, including hospitals and schools.

Those who have been able to flee are unable to return to their homes. Their lives have been destroyed, families have been separated and their futures erased. They do not understand economic, political or strategic interests. They want solutions, actions, measures and firm political commitments.

That is why we are here today: to shoulder the responsibility that has been assigned to the Security Council. The Syrian population needs an urgent response from every one of us meeting here. We must therefore renew our commitment, set aside our differences and commit to a negotiated solution that will make possible a way out of the current crisis. Dialogue requires that all stakeholders respect their obligations under international law, particularly international humanitarian law and international human rights law. It is imperative to respect the provisions of the Council's resolutions.

Just over four months ago, the Council adopted resolution 2286 (2016), on the protection of hospitals and humanitarian personnel in situations of armed conflict. However, despite the fact that the resolution was co-sponsored by more than 80 United Nations States Members, hospitals continue to be bombed. No mistake can justify such action while the most vulnerable continue to be attacked.

Now and forever, we condemn the increasing use of chemical weapons against the civilian population, which is one of the most flagrant violations of international humanitarian law, and we repudiate the use of barrel bombs that do untold harm to the local populace. Those who are responsible must be identified by the Joint Investigative Mechanism. In that context, I reiterate Uruguay's firmest condemnation of the activities of terrorist groups operating in the region. We are convinced that there can be no justification for such acts, be it political, ideological, philosophical, religious, ethnic, racial or of any other nature. Similarly, we are concerned about the growing destabilizing impact of these groups in the conflict in Syria, which adversely affect the ability to achieve sustainable solutions to the aforementioned conflict.

We therefore consider it essential that, together with the political efforts being exerted in the Syrian conflict, the commitment to the implementation of effective and efficient measures against the financing of terrorist groups be renewed, with a comprehensive and long-term approach. Similarly, greater efforts should be made with respect to arms trafficking, regulating trade and ensuring the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty. This decision requires the commitment of all States of the international community, which we humbly request.

We must continue to support the work and efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura. It is essential to restore the dialogue between the parties so as to reach without further delay a political, peaceful and Syrian-led solution that takes nothing but the interests of the Syrian people into account. Uruguay stresses the importance for this process to enjoy the support of the United Nations and the key actors in the conflict.

In that regard, we are deeply concerned about the fragility of recent ceasefire agreements. We are convinced that without the strict compliance of all stakeholders, a long-term political solution that ensures peace for the Syrian people will not be possible. Similarly, the uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian assistance is essential, and guarantees for such effective delivery are linked directly to the aforementioned ceasefire. There can be no humanitarian action without a ceasefire. We must not forget that the commitment to peace and security in the region and with the Syrian people is now a shared commitment.

The shocking images that continuously bombard us with the horror of this conflict remind us of the primary role of the Organization and of what we should be doing. It is in our hands. We can and must do more.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jean-Marc Ayrault, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development of France.

Mr. Ayrault (France) (*spoke in French*): While Syria has been mired in tragedy for five years, and while each passing day propels the country further into chaos and its people into horror, it is more urgent than ever to work together to seek to end the conflict. That is our collective responsibility. The peoples of the world are watching. They will judge us severely if we fail to uphold the mission that the Charter of United Nations entrusts to the Security Council.

An agreement was signed last week by the United States and Russia. France welcomed it as a response to an emergency — that of saving human lives. For five years, civilians have borne the heaviest toll of this appalling war. Aleppo, a martyr city, symbolizes the horror of this war. The fighting must stop, humanitarian assistance must be delivered, and a momentum for peace must be launched with a view to reaching a political solution that includes reconstruction and the return of refugees who have fled by the millions.

All of us around this table know how difficult that is, as recent developments have unfortunately demonstrated. Yet again, the logic of violence has prevailed; yet again, the truce has collapsed; yet again, the Syrian regime has stubbornly pursued its headlong military strategy, although the military solution is doomed. We are forced to wonder whether the unspoken goal may be, after all, the fall of Aleppo and the de facto partition and effective control of Syria.

This vicious cycle has lasted long enough. It has lasted too long. In this conflict, where there are more unknowns than knowns, one thing is certain — after five years of a war that has claimed more than 300,000 dead and displaced millions, it is obvious that nobody can win by force. There will be no winner, other than the terrorist organizations that will continue to benefit from the widespread chaos that will prevail. If there is one certainty about this conflict, it is that its outcome can only be political.

In the face of the Syrian tragedy and the risk of failure, the time for second thoughts, short-sighted

calculations, tactical considerations and double-talk is over, inside the Security Council and out. We must first ensure the sustainability of the cessation of hostilities. In that regard, the Russian-American agreement is for now, I repeat, the only proposal on the table. But we must be clear-sighted; the numerous violations on the ground are in their overwhelming majority the acts of the regime and its allies. The heinous bombing of a humanitarian convoy in Aleppo, which has been mentioned several times this morning, has outraged international public opinion. It is a sorry illustration of the spiral of violence. The constant bombings of medical facilities and personnel are yet another aspect. The full truth behind these tragedies and their sponsors must be revealed, as the Secretary-General noted earlier. Our common moral duty is to join forces to ensure respect for the cessation of hostilities. Our collective commitment must be to ensure the effective, just and lasting implementation of the truce.

I emphasize that effectiveness is critical if Syrians are to feel the concrete impact of the cessation of hostilities. Humanitarian assistance must therefore be delivered. It can longer be subject to the regime's haggling. All bombing of civilians and moderate opposition groups must stop. Strict monitoring is vital. Experience teaches us that the regime exploits truces, applied locally, to focus its military efforts on other fronts. Why, then, do we not require the regime to canton all its soldiers, since the effectiveness of the truce depends on that? I propose, on behalf of France, that the Security Council work practically to that end.

The second requirement is that of justice, which demands that no crime be ignored, even in exchange for a truce. It has been proved that the regime has used chemical weapons, as has Da'esh. The perpetrators of those crimes must be punished. There will be no lasting peace in Syria if there is impunity. It therefore up to the Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, to condemn those attacks and punish the perpetrators. It is a moral duty, but also an obligation of the international community, which has wanted to eliminate chemical weapons forever.

And the third necessity is that of sustainability. The ceasefire agreement must be sustainable, for it is essential for creating the conditions for a future peace. A new governance arrangement must open up political prospects and create a collective space. Certainly, one cannot generate new hope around a figure who divides Syrians and sows mostly death and destruction. Resolution 2254 (2015), which Mr. De Mistura evoked again a while ago, provides a road map for a political transition and a devolution of power.

The United States and Russia of course have special responsibility for the implementation of the agreement they negotiated: they co-chair the International Syria Support Group. But as I said at the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) meeting, as well as to Sergey Lavrov and John Kerry, and as I have said here before members, France is convinced that only collective mobilization will make it possible to achieve the goals that I just mentioned. Everyone must take up their responsibilities. It is true that this approach has its value, but it also has its limitations. France is therefore ready to take on its responsibility as part of the new credible and effective monitoring mechanism we are proposing. Such a mechanism must make possible a shared assessment of violations of the truce and the obstacles to humanitarian access, as well as to determine consequences. We must leave behind the approach of mutual accusations, which precipitated the failure of previous agreements and was not conducive to an atmosphere of confidence. There is too much mistrust — a feeling I also noted at the ISSG meeting. We must therefore create propitious conditions to move forward. I therefore make this proposal for a new monitoring mechanism. I have circulated here among all Council and ISSG members the non-paper we prepared for discussion.

Once an effective truce is in place and humanitarian access is assured, which is the priority, negotiations for a genuine political transition can, and must, resume. We know what the parameters are, namely, the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015), which was mentioned frequently by previous speakers. The High Negotiations Committee has presented proposals and is ready to play a constructive role for a Syria that is open, democratic and respectful of its diversity. What have we seen from the regime if not propaganda and delaying tactics? But proposals for a negotiation? None to date. The burden of evidence is therefore with them and its allies.

Finally, what is at stake in Syria is also a major battle against terrorism. That fight has not ended, nor must it. It must continue, both against Da'esh and all other groups in Syria that espouse the same ideology and violence, including, again Da'esh, as well as Al-Qaida and the Al-Nusra Front. France again reiterates that that must include all non-jihadist armed

groups, which should distance themselves from those terrorist organizations — and fast.

France is playing its part in this common fight of the international community against terrorism alongside the coalition. We are acting militarily against Da'esh and are prepared to do the same against any terrorist group, which we must prevent from taking advantage of the truce to strengthen themselves and prosper. But nothing will be more useful in the fight against Da'esh than our collective mobilization to ensure that at long last Syria once again finds its way towards peace and stability. If we yield to impotence, fatalism and resigning ourselves, I think we will bear a heavy responsibility. The press are already saying that it is all over, definitively stating that we have failed and that there is not even a slight chance for a ceasefire to take. It is up to us here to demonstrate that that is not true and that there is still hope. We must show that we do not want to be complicit in the fall of Aleppo — which I again say is a martyred city — or in the martyrdom of the Syrian people. France will not resign itself to that. And I have heard statements here this morning that inspire me to hold out that hope.

What we need is a burst of will, a burst of responsibility and a burst of unity to end a conflict that has lasted far too long. That is the appeal I make before the Council today in the name of France.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. José Manuel García Margallo, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain.

Mr. García Margallo (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My statement will focus on previous views on the conflict, the humanitarian situation, remarks about terrorism, the political process and the role of the United Nations.

With regard to earlier perceptions, we all agree that, as with other conflicts in the Middle East, the roots of the conflict lie in the absence of political regimes capable of ensuring cohesion among societies that are intrinsically diverse. As a consequence, as the French Foreign Minister just said, partial or temporary solutions will not do. To the contrary, we need lasting and stable solutions that address all the problems. I also agree that there is no time to lose. At the moment we have two avenues before us. The first is a political framework to address the conflict, including the Security Council and the International Syria Support Group, and the second is a legal basis for resolving the problem, namely, resolution 2254 (2015), by which we are all bound. What we lack is the courage and political will to ensure compliance with our resolutions and sufficient imagination to envision a political process that brings about a definitive end to the conflict.

The second point I want to make has to do with the humanitarian dimension. I will not repeat the statistics of the terrible consequences of the conflict in Syria. We all know them. I will also not mention the consequences of the conflict on host countries, which are having to bear the enormous burden of refugees. We heard about that yesterday at a meeting we all attended. And nor will I refer to the consequences for Europe. But know that, in large part, the increase in populism and xenophobic movements is due to the impact of refugees in our countries. But, as I said, I do want to talk about the humanitarian situation, although I will not refer to the consequences of violations of international humanitarian laws, which is one of the main result of the conflict. We have spoken of attacks against civilians. We have talked about attacks against medical facilities. And we have referred to the use of prohibited weapons.

There are two consequences to all that. There can be no impunity for those who have committed such crimes.

Some time ago, Spain proposed establishing an international criminal court specializing in crimes of terrorism that would try crimes that the International Criminal Court and national courts do not have the authority to try. As our Malaysian colleague noted, Spain, along with New Zealand and Egypt, Spain has been a leader on humanitarian issues in the Security Council, since it is an area we consider particularly important.

With regard to terrorism, Spain has broad experience in both its domestic and international forms. In sharing my thoughts on this with the Council, I should point out that we are dealing with three levels of action. The first is pursuing action at the international level, that is, by doing away with the forums and movements that export terrorism to the rest of the world. That is being done by the international coalition of which Spain is an active member. At the national level, we must eliminate the flows of foreign fighters who come and go between our countries and Syria, as well as financial flows and arms trafficking. In Syria, at the domestic level, it is crucial that we separate the wheat from the chaff — that is, the

moderate opposition groups from those that are clearly terrorist. I am thinking in particular of Da'esh and the Al-Nusra Front, as I think we can all agree. However, we must also convince the 20 groups that have not yet decided on one side or the other to make up their minds as to which side of the divide they are on, and we should then draw the appropriate conclusions.

Regarding the political process that I mentioned earlier, there can be no lasting peace without dialogue and reconciliation within Syrian society. I think we all agree that, to start with, there is no military solution. Neither side can win the war, and if there is no military solution we have to reach a political solution based on dialogue. It cannot be dialogue for its own sake, however; rather, it must be dialogue aimed at reaching an authentic national reconciliation — and believe me, Spaniards know something about that. But I believe some conditions are essential if that dialogue is to culminate in reconciliation.

All the parties to the conflict should understand that the new Syria will not be the precise Syria that they have fought or are fighting for, but it will be a Syria that is a common home for all stakeholders of goodwill who genuinely desire peace. To achieve that new Syria, various conditions must be met. The first is the return of exiles, without whose cooperation it will not be possible to build a new Syria. The second is to avoid dismantling institutions, so as to avoid the mistakes we made in Iraq and Libya. The third is to understand that the Syria we want is an integrated Syria, where the principle of territorial integrity is respected — we cannot accept or tolerate the possibility that the conflict will end with its partition — a plural Syria, because Syria is a plural society, and a democratic society that respects human rights.

To make that possible, and to launch a political process that can result in this new Syria, some preconditions are essential. The ceasefire must be guaranteed, and that is absolutely the responsibility of all us. Access must be ensured for humanitarian aid to the individuals, populations and communities that are suffering the most. And a political dialogue must be facilitated. The latter is the responsibility of the Security Council, the International Syria Support Group and in particular those countries that can exert more influence on the parties to the conflict, whichever they may be. While we can see that an endless war is developing in Syria, there are external actors that are taking advantage of the conflict when they are not actually fomenting it.

I would like to conclude with a quotation from the Spanish thinker Salvador de Madariaga — himself an international civil servant — who in 1951, when the Spanish Civil War was finally over, addressed both the internal and external opposition, speaking in this very Organization, with the following words:

> "Those of us who once chose liberty and lost their land and those who chose land and lost their liberty are reunited to light the way that will lead us together to both land and liberty."

Amen to that.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Boris Johnson, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Johnson (United Kingdom): I would like to say to Secretary Kerry that I do not think that the people of the world are remotely fooled by what is going on in Syria. They know that this is not just a civil war; it is a barbaric proxy war, a conflict that is being fed, nourished, armed, abetted, protracted and made more hideous by the actions and inactions of Governments represented in this Chamber. They are looking to us — grown-ups, people with families, people who know about the world, people with university degrees — to set aside our differences and any selfish sense of strategic national interest and to put the people of Syria first. That means recognizing that there can be no political process unless there is a genuine ceasefire, and that there can be no genuine ceasefire unless there is a genuine political agreement that we can have a transition away from the Al-Assad Government.

It is the Al-Assad Government that is responsible for the vast majority of the 400,000 deaths in Syria, and that continues to drop barrel bombs on its own citizens, including two incidents, documented by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, of the dropping of chlorine gas. How can we sit by and let burning, blistering, barbaric chlorine gas be dropped on innocent people? As for the monstrous bombing of aid convoys and medical facilities that we have seen just in the last day or so, as Mr. Kerry rightly said, there are only two possible culprits. I hope very much that the truth will soon emerge about what exactly happened.

However, more importantly, laying aside recrimination, I hope that we will learn that the court of international opinion will not continue to tolerate this slaughter. I think the world is looking to us to do more now than just mouth the empty platitudes of resolution 2254 (2015), but to actually put it into practical effect and get that peace process and those conversations going again in Geneva. I think there is scope to build on the vision for a future for Syria, as laid out by the negotiations committee, of an open, pluralistic, democratic Syria, with respect for all minorities. And there is space, as the President rightly said, to compromise, and there should not be too many red lines. But above all, we must use this moment — in particular, the general debate of the General Assembly — to keep whatever impetus is left for this precious forward momentum in the Kerry-Lavrov process. Once again, I pay tribute to both Mr. Kerry and Mr. Lavrov for their efforts to get this done and move it forward.

We can do it. The people here in this Chamber can do it. They can help to produce a ceasefire; they have proved that before. They can get talks going, and we can approach these issues in a spirit of compromise. But we cannot have that spirit of compromise, talks or ceasefire without the will — as Foreign Minister García Margallo rightly said in his statement — and the good will of the people in the Chamber. I believe that it is possible and that there is the scope for compromise. I think that it is pretty gloomy now. Let us face it. Sometimes, the hour is darkest before dawn.

What I really want everybody to think about today is this. If in a year's time we are here again in anger and there are still bombings, killings, slaughter and massacres going on in Syria, then I am afraid that the responsibility for that will lie overwhelmingly with the people broadly represented in this place and above all with the Al-Assad regime and its sponsors.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Wang Yi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Wang Yi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank New Zealand for having convened this high-level meeting in the Security Council, and I also appreciate the fact that you, Sir, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, have come to preside over this meeting.

Peace is the shared aspiration of people throughout the world. This very Chamber embodies the vision of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war. The Security Council shoulders the responsibility for international peace and security. Our world today is peaceful in general, but we have witnessed successive regional disturbances and local conflicts. Traditional and non-traditional security issues are intertwined, and international security is complex.

The turbulence in West Asia and North African fomented by the Syrian issue has been lingering for five years. That has brought suffering to the countries and peoples of the region. It has also had grave effects on international peace and security. Many innocent lives have been lost. Numerous homes have been destroyed. Endless conflicts have emerged and receded. All of this has taught us the following lessons.

First, a political solution remains the only way out. Responding to violence with violence will only feed hatred. The use of force will not end conflicts but fuel warfare. The stakeholders in the Middle East must pursue dialogue and negotiations to narrow differences, accommodate the interests of the various parties and seek the most lasting and sustainable solutions. The international community must pursue political settlement with resolve and patience, and provide sufficient time and space for such efforts.

Secondly, we must address both the symptoms and root causes. The tensions in the Middle East are complex. Many issues are intertwined and can be addressed only with a multi-pronged approach. Improving people's livelihoods, fostering a culture of tolerance and building harmony are fundamental to addressing the chaos in the Middle East. They are also the essential means of avoiding new turbulence. Countries should follow the path of development to maintain their own conditions. In that regard, there is no standard answer but only tailored solutions. We must respect the choices made by States on their own.

Thirdly, we must uphold multilateralism to resolve the issues in Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East. The people of the countries concerned should play the primary role, but the international community should also provide a helping hand. The United Nations and the Security Council must play their part as main channels while other forces should act in a just and fair manner, doing more to facilitate rather than undermine their efforts.

To address the issue of Syria, the relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 2254 (2015), must be effectively implemented. We remember that,

in this very same Chamber, all members unanimously adopted the resolution, which has laid out the overall direction for resolving the Syrian issue and established the principle of a Syrian-owned and led political process. We believe that we need to pursue progress in parallel in terms of a ceasefire, political negotiations, humanitarian assistance and joint efforts aimed at fighting terrorism. We hope that this year might be a turning point with regard to the situation in Syria.

We welcome the fact that Russia and the United States of America have once again reached a ceasefire agreement on Syria. We appreciate the enormous efforts they have made to that end. Of course, we hope that this new agreement will entail new opportunities for the situation on the ground, but we see that its implementation is not going smoothly. China expresses its regret with regard to the air strike on Government forces and the ensuing casualties. We also find the recent attacks on the United Nations humanitarian convoy unacceptable. All parties should strengthen coordination and cooperation to avoid such occurrences and ensure the full and effective implementation of the hard-won ceasefire agreement. That will help foster the necessary conditions for peace talks and the easing of the humanitarian situation.

The conflicting parties in Syria should not fight for victory on the battlefield. They should resolve their disputes at the negotiation table. China calls for a timely resumption of the Geneva peace talks. We call upon all parties to follow the Syrian-owned and -led political process to arrive at arrangements that meet the interests of all parties. External forces should not use the conflict to pursue their selfish goals. They should contribute to peace. Faced by the grave humanitarian situation, various parties and factions in Syrian must open access to humanitarian aid to ensure its timely delivery. The international community should continue reach out and help the Syrian people in these difficult times and assist neighbouring countries in properly settling refugees.

China will also continue to carry out its own efforts in this respect. Yesterday and today, Premier Li Keqiang of China has laid out our positions on various occasions. He also announced our new humanitarian assistance programme for refugees and migrants.

Chaos in Syria has fuelled terrorism. We believe that we should firmly combat all terrorist forces, including the Islamic State. We should strengthen international cooperation in the fight against terrorism in the three areas of intelligence-sharing, stopping the use of social media for spreading extremist ideology, and cutting off the flow and financing channels of terrorists.

China is a sincere friend of all parties in the Middle East. We have no selfish interests in the region. The interests of the people of the Middle East are our interests. Their concerns are China's concerns. As a permanent member of the Security Council, China will continue to fulfil its responsibilities and play its due role in ensuring peace and security in the Middle East. I believe that through joint efforts we will turn sword into ploughshare and realize peace.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Manuel Domingos Augusto, Secretary of State for External Relations of the Republic of Angola.

Mr. Domingos Augusto (Angola): First of all, we wish to thank the delegation of New Zealand for organizing this meeting. I take this opportunity to congratulate New Zealand on the efforts that it has been making in its presidency of the Security Council to bridge the gaps between Council members on sensitive and contentious issues, such as the Syrian conflict. Today's meeting is an expression of such efforts.

At this critical juncture, it is vital that the entire international community diligently and constructively initiate efforts, taking into consideration the fact that the people of Syria continue to bear the appalling consequences of the terrible war. Unfortunately, political differences and strategic interests continue to obstruct the prospects for negotiations that might lead to the attainment of a settlement that would end the conflict and spare millions of Syrian civilians from violence, humanitarian catastrophe and an unprecedented refugee crisis.

We received with optimism the news of the recent agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Syria brokered by the Governments of the United States of America and the Russian Federation as a critical step towards restarting the political dialogue, improving the dire humanitarian situation and more effectively combating the terrorist scourge that has permeated the Middle East and beyond. The most heinous perpetrators of terrorist acts and violent extremism — Al-Qaida, the Taliban, the Al-Nusra Front, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, also known as Da'esh — will get stronger if protracted

conflicts, such as the one in Syria, where geopolitical interests take precedence over people's well-being, are not resolved.

For more than five years, we have witnessed the destruction of schools, medical services and other civilian infrastructure, such as electricity- and water-distribution facilities, and the erosion of the Syrian social fabric in general. Despite humanitarian agencies' efforts to provide assistance to those in need and the linkage between the provision of humanitarian assistance and the launching of a meaningful political process, and even though the official rhetoric on both sides has been one of de-escalation and the willingness to resume political negotiations, the reality is that military gains of strategic importance continue to take precedence over peace negotiations.

Against the backdrop of this reality, the civilian population, particularly the younger generation, which has been forced to flee, has become marginalized, disenchanted and frustrated and is fertile ground for an ideology of extremism and hate and an illusionary sense of purpose and belonging in the face of such deep social and political grievances. It is crucial that regional and international stakeholders preserve the political will that led to the ceasefire and that the understanding reached be sustained. The time has come for all relevant actors in the region to redouble their efforts to bring the parties back to the negotiating table and begin the slow and arduous process of ending hostilities. This will in turn allow for the free and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid and the re-establishment of a national dialogue for a political settlement of this irrational conflict, with the aim of putting an end to the suffering of the Syrian people. That should be our main priority.

In conclusion, we would like to acknowledge the personal commitments undertaken by the United States Secretary of State, Mr. John Kerry, and the Russian Federation Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sergey Lavrov, in brokering the ceasefire agreement, as well as the tireless efforts of Special Envoy De Mistura to bridge the existing gaps between the belligerents and get the Syrian parties and regional and international stakeholders on the same track, in order to facilitate the resumption of a more fruitful round of negotiations. It is our profound wish that the members of the Security Council, the International Syria Support Group and other regional stakeholders recognize the long-term benefits of ending the conflict and exert the necessary pressure for the resumption of negotiations and for a more effective and united combat against the ever-expanding terrorist threat.

The cooperative work of those entities should be focused on drastically reducing the flow of arms into Syria, increasing the delivery of humanitarian aid, establishing as the main priority an end to the conflict and easing the plight of the innocent civilians trapped in this bloody war. Hopefully, this debate, together with our collective endeavours, will galvanize the international community towards making a more proactive effort. There is a renewed sense of urgency to end armed conflicts, as they are at the root of rising radicalism and extremist ideology in conflict zones and throughout the world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): First and foremost, I wish to inform the Security Council that, as we meet here today to discuss the situation in my country, thousands of Syrians, honest Americans and persons from other countries are demonstrating on 47th Street, outside the Conference Building, calling on members of the Council to stop their bombing of and interference in Syria as well as their support for terrorist groups. Similar demonstrations are also taking place in other American cities, including in the State of California.

This important meeting about my country, Syria, is being held at a critical time, as we are witnessing serious disruptions that run contrary to the promising signs of the past week. This is mainly due to the fact that the United States disavowed the agreement it had concluded with the Russian Federation in Geneva on 9 September. It is also due to the unwillingness to force the armed groups supported by the so-called international coalition to abide by the aforementioned Geneva agreement. One must point out that the term "international", used to describe this coalition, does not convey the reality. That is to say, the coalition was formed outside the realm of international legitimacy, without a Security Council resolution and without coordination with the stakeholder, namely, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. This coalition is reminiscent of other destructive coalitions to which many speakers today have referred, coalitions that have brought nothing but disaster to such countries as Iraq, Libya and Yemen.

When the United States Administration decided to intervene unilaterally in my country through air raids, American officials came to us to say that Washington would commit not to use American warplanes to target the Syrian Army or vital infrastructure. Rather, only the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) would be targeted. I received the personal assurances on that point from the Permanent Representative of the United States, who spoke on behalf of her Government. It was a message conveyed by her Government.

Two years after the establishment of the coalition and the beginning of the air raids, American officials have forgotten their promises and their commitments. American jets are bombing Syrian Army facilities and vital infrastructure and American soldiers are now present in Syrian territories. The American military aggression on eastern Syria, the Turkish military aggression on northern Syria and the Israeli military aggression on southern Syria mean, without a shadow of a doubt, that the proxy war has become a real war and a true aggression on my country.

My country welcomed the Russian-American statements on 9 September after both parties agreed to combat the terrorist organizations, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and the Al-Nusra Front, regardless of their their names. That agreement was concluded with the knowledge and consent of the Syrian Government. However, the international community, represented by the Council, received a horrific shock before which it stood helpless, unable to issue a condemnation or express outrage at the very least. That shock was the unjustified, brutal aggression that was launched by American, British and Australian and Danish fighter jets against Syrian Arab Army targets. The units of our army are combating the ISIS terrorist organization in the mountainous area of Tharda, in the vicinity of Deir ez-Zor airport. Those units had been defending tens of thousands of Syrian civilians besieged by ISIS in Deir ez-Zor city.

That gruesome attack resulted in numerous casualties among the officers and soldiers of the Syrian Arab Army — 83 martyrs and over 100 wounded. The aggression, which lasted for an entire 50 minutes of air raids and was preceded by reconnaissance flights by drones over two days, paved the way for ISIS terrorists to enter the military site of the Syrian army that was targeted deliberately before the Syrian army was able to recapture it again. To add insult to injury, our soldiers and the wounded were victims of another air strike by drones while they were evacuating their positions in Tharda after it was targeted.

Before that deliberate and unacceptable aggression, my country had been focusing on the issue of disassociating terrorist groups, in line with the statement of the International Syria Support Group issued at a meeting in Vienna on 14 November 2015. That is to say, we wanted to determine those that are terrorist groups, those that are not and those that can be considered to be opposition groups. However, it appears that 10 months were not enough for some to solve this puzzling mystery. It appears that some suffered from an early bout of Alzheimer's disease while trying to solve this mystery.

Along the same lines, Damascus expected Washington to fulfil its commitments in this regard by putting an end to the policies and practices of certain well-known countries that sponsor and support terrorism politically, logistically, financially and ideologically through the media. We expected an end to the influx of terrorists, weapons and funding from countries neighbouring Syria through the borders and the use of terrorism as a tool for political blackmail.

American reconnaissance aircraft, surveillance satellites and intelligence services failed to distinguish between ISIS and those fighting ISIS. The so-called international coalition failed to do so. It is no stranger to such failure. For years the coalition failed to detect thousands of foreign fighters that came to Syria and Iraq from around the world, an issue that was dealt with, thankfully, by a speaker in the Council today. They failed to detect convoys of armed vehicles and thousands of ISIS terrorists who travelled from Iraq to Palmyra in a long journey of over 200 kilometres across the Syrian desert. They failed to detect thousands of lorries that steal and smuggle Syrian oil to Turkey in order to fund the attacks of ISIS. They also failed to cut off the funding of terrorist organizations, even though they know very well the origin and destination of every dollar that reaches ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front. The only success they were able to achieve was to fabricate false accusations, made-up incidents, politicized reports and edited videos about the suffering of Syrians to demonize the Syrian Government and its allies.

It is quite astonishing that the United States Secretary of State would use the testimony of a so-called eye witness who noticed planes over the humanitarian convoy that was attacked yesterday in northern Syria.

The testimony of that eye witness, who is a member of the so-called moderate armed opposition, the Syrian opposition, was sufficient to establish that the air bombing of this humanitarian convoy occurred and for Mr. Kerry to accuse both the Syrian and the Russian Governments. My question is, can one individual in a crowded area that is inhabited by thousands of people, can he, on his own, notice airplanes, while others, thousands who live in this area, did not see these air strikes? The issue of eye witnesses is a laughable one, especially when we are reminded that those who accuse the Syrian Government of using chemical weapons relied on a single eye witness account who saw orange smoke. That is what we were told by the Syrian opposition. No one was there — neither the Turkish army, nor the American army nor the terrorists who stole Syrian helicopters from where they were parked at the airport.

To refresh the memory of Council members, I want to recall the mistakes by American officials. It appears that the American side does not learn from its mistakes. Since the establishment of the so-called international coalition, American forces made several mistakes. It mistakenly bombed an elementary school for the visually impaired in the city of Raqqah and it mistakenly air-dropped assistance over Ayn Al-Arab city that included weapons and rockets that fell into the hands of ISIS terrorists. It mistakenly killed Syrian civilians near the city of Raqqah, while claiming to target a weapons factory for ISIS. The gravest mistake was subsequently committed by a French and American forces when a joint air raid resulted in the death of over 200 civilians near Aleppo in the town of Manbij. One Council member deplored the situation in Aleppo just a few minutes ago. We note that 200 civilians were killed near that very city in a joint air raid carried out by the international coalition.

The latest wave of false accusations levelled at my Government included the allegation that we targeted a humanitarian convoy outside of Aleppo. Such accusations are part of a filthy propaganda war that was launched by well-known parties to exploit the suffering of the Syrian people for the sole purposes of scoring cheap points in the press, employing political blackmail and upholding their agendas with no regard for the heavy toll paid by the Syrian people whenever those same parties reject any solution that is not in line with their agendas. thereby prolonging the crisis.

My country, Syria, has warned of the attempts of certain regional parties to torpedo the American-Russian agreement ever since it was announced and before it entered into force. I want to draw attention to the heinous Israeli attacks on Syrian territory in recent weeks, which intensified once the American-Russian agreement to combat the Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist organizations, such as the Al-Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade, was announced. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations remains suspiciously silent although we have sent many letters to the Council about the Israeli violations and the treatment of terrorists in Israeli hospitals.

I also wish to draw attention to the illegitimate Turkish military operations within Syrian territory, launched under the pretext of combatting Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) without prior coordination with the Syrian Government and the Russian operations command, which is a crime of aggression according to the Charter of the United Nations and the Council's provisional rules of procedure. It is a violation of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. That is in line with remarks made by Turkish officials indicating that their Government wanted to deliver humanitarian assistance to the city of Aleppo without coordination with the Syrian Government or the United Nations.

My country is ready to resume intra-Syrian dialogue without preconditions and according to the decisions and foundations that launched this dialogue in order to reach a political solution decided by Syrians and Syrians alone, without foreign intervention or interference, so that Syrians can decide their future and their options through their own leaders in a manner that would ensure Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Syria will not become another Libya or Iraq — we will never allow it.

In that regard, we reaffirm that the success of any political process in Syria will require engagement, cooperation and full coordination with the Syrian Government as the main partner in any related domain. No committee, meeting or conference organized to resolve the crisis can succeed while some international parties seek, willingly or unwillingly, to exclude or marginalize the Syrian Government, cast doubt on its cooperation with the United Nations or undermine the success it has achieved in promoting and upholding national reconciliation based on the voluntary disarmament of foreign fighters and accompanied by the normalization of their status, the issuance of

pardons and their departure to other areas. That, in turn, will allow normal life to resume to in the areas they vacate and State institutions to restore the services they once provided.

I have a final question. Can we allow hundreds of armed groups and tens of thousands of terrorists to continue their terrorist attacks against my Government, my army and Syria's infrastructure, as they have done for over five and a half years? Can they continue without external support? That is a legitimate question, and I believe it should be acknowledged. We should not be misled into believing that the situation in Syria is a civil war.

The President: The representative of the United States has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): As Secretary Kerry quoted earlier in this session, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynahan had said my colleagues are entitled to their own opinions but not to their own facts. Let us just keep in mind the facts of who is prolonging the suffering of the Syrian people. The last speaker's statement was so full of untruths that I feel no need to say anything further.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Turkey, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the representative of Turkey to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I call on the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Begeç (Turkey): I have asked for the floor to reply to the statement made by the representative of Syria.

The Turkish position on the political, security and humanitarian aspects of the Syrian conflict were shared yesterday with the United Nations membership at the highest political level. I have nothing to add on that score, yet I wish to emphasize our dismay with certain parts of the statement delivered by the representative of the regime. The statement contained distorted facts and baseless accusations, including some levelled at Turkey. We reject them in their entirety.

This meeting, on the other hand, was instrumental in facilitating the exchange of views at the political level with regard to matters of mutual interest and importance concerning Syria. However, the utility of the meeting could have been considerably enhanced should the voice of the genuine representative of the people Syria, from the High Negotiations Committee, be heard as well. We are confident that such a day will come soon. We are equally confident that, eventually, those responsible for the destruction of Syria and the suffering of the Syrian people will be held accountable for the crimes they have committed. Until then, Turkey will stand by the democratic expressions of the Syrian people.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.